

Press Release

April 19, 2000

Contact Persons: Nancy Zak or Lito Miranda, 589-3353

Ironbound Joins Hundreds of Residents on City Hall Steps To Say "Land For Schools!"

Residents Win A Victory When Mayor Announces Effort To Retrieve Land

Ironbound residents marched up Lafayette St. all the way to City Hall on Wednesday, April 19, and joined hundreds of other Newark residents for a non-time rally demanding "Land for Schools." Waving red balloons, children, parents and senior citizens walked from outside Lafayette St. School led by a police escort. The Ironbound Boys & Girls Club bus drove residents who could not walk, and the Ironbound Community Corporation's yellow bus led the parade. "What do we want? New schools!" "When do we want them?" "Now!" was the chant.

At City Hall, residents from every ward asked the Mayor, City Council and Central Planning Board to reserve land for the new schools which are mandated by court order to be built in Newark. The Abbott v. Burke case orders poor school districts to replace its substandard or overcrowded schools. Schools in Ironbound are on the average 62% overcrowded, some as much as 200%.

Lidia Rossi, a parent from AnnSt. School, asked the city to "make education the city's number one priority." Lito Miranda, a parent from Hawkins St. School, stressed the need for the city to put sites for schools on the Land Use maps in its proposed new masterplan. "If parks, schools, and community facilities are put on the map, it holds them from being developed."

Marc Tronco, from the Forest Hill Association, said, "Newark is supposed to be the Renaissance City, that is the city of learning. But it seems we haven't even learned the alphabet. We have the A – the Arts Center. We have the B – the baseball stadium, and now the basketball arena. But we seem to have skipped the C – the children!"

Two huge bundles of petitions were given to the Mayor from residents protesting recent decisions by the Central Planning Board, in which land which was needed for expansion of Franklin St. School and Gladys-Hillman Jones was approved for housing developments. During March, many Ironbound organizations and residents delivered thousands of petitions to City Hall calling for land for schools, and parks, and a focus on planning and how it affects quality of life in the neighborhoods.

After the Rally, Mayor Sharpe James announced that the City will try to get the land which the north ward community wanted for school expansions back from the developers.

"This is a step forward. The City has to make land for schools a priority. The land has to be reserved now because in two years it will not be there," said Joseph Della Fave, from the Ironbound Community Corporation.

The rally organizers – from all wards of Newark – are now planning a trip to Trenton, to press the state to release the money for new schools. A planning meeting for the Trenton trip will be held on Wednesday, April 26 at 7:00 PM at New Community Corporation, 56 Hayes St. For more information or rides, call Ironbound Community corporation 589-3353.